



Straining at the moorings in a strong current on the Nile at Khartoum.



Moored at Cairo, the barge is loaded with flare-path equipment.

INAUGURAL FLIGHT

at Southampton. The passage through Health, Immigration and Customs was smooth and quick, and confirmed the good impression formed at the opening. After long-drawn-out but well-meaning instructions on the tannoy, and a *bon voyage*—with a note of envy—we had the infinite pleasure of boarding without climbing steps or via a launch.

Having completed all the informalities of departure and the formalities of passenger drill, R.M.A. *Southampton* was allowed to drift (apparently) into the stream where motors were started and we taxied down river for take-off. We passed the B.O.A.C. base at Hythe with Solents, Hythes and Plymouths in natural irregular formation. After all four engines had been run-up we turned for take-off, and the Bristol Hercules 637s were opened up only to die almost immediately—a magneto drop on one engine. We returned and went ashore accompanied by such remarks as, "So this is Augusta"; "You have caught the sun"; and "I didn't know Augusta was so built up." However, we slipped again some seven hours later, and as the Hercules once again were given their full power the water surged past the cabin windows on the lower deck, hiding the glint of the setting sun on the starboard float. The thrashing bow wave subsided as we got on to the step, and a great arc of water was flung outwards and behind us.

To every passenger on board it was the first flight in a Solent, and first impressions are always important. We heard comments about the smooth take-off, the short run, powerful climb, early throttling back and, from the land-lubbers, the smooth taxiing and the complete absence of any feeling of swing and corrective braking during the take-off; all of which built up a feeling of security. It was the rational method of flying, we concluded.

The sun was setting as we climbed over the coast of

Normandy, and little was seen of France except the twinkling lights from villages about 7,000 ft below. Avignon was pointed out to us and we easily identified Marseilles with the flashing beacons of Marignane near by. As we approached Sardinia we were above cloud with a brilliant moon, but over Sicily the cloud dispersed, and we could see the silhouette of Mt. Etna on the port side. The night alighting at Augusta was a new experience for many. A short night was spent in the barrack-like buildings rented by B.O.A.C., and the next morning, back on the original schedule, we took off in brilliant sunshine for Cairo, passing over the ancient city of Syracuse as we left the island.

Enthusiasm Along the Route

On the houseboat *Puritan* in the Nile we were received by travel agents and the local Press, all of whom are used to flying-boat services through the Egyptian capital (there are about sixteen services a week with Plymouths and Hythes flying to Australia and the Far East). They did, however, express appreciation of the elegance of the Solent, which they had watched touch-down in a strong cross-wind, and their belief in the new route which we were opening.

From Cairo we flew to Luxor the same day. An interesting incident occurred before we took off: Two feluccas were tacking down the waterway past the trots and refused to abandon their tack and pull into the side. The fire launch then threatened an attack with hoses from alongside, which had an immediate effect, and they were then taken in tow. This is a fairly frequent procedure which gives great joy to the fire crew.

At Luxor there was extreme local interest, owing to the absolute novelty of aircraft. Luxor has never been used before as a stopping place for flying boats, and H.E. the Governor of the Province of Kena was enthusiastic about the new service. It was an impressive scene as our launch drew alongside the landing stage, the steps were



Luggage being wheeled past interested spectators on the quay at Vaaldam.

Captain E. Rotheram (extreme right) and next to him Captain J. M. Peers, with the rest of the crew: (right to left) Mr. P. P. O. Serle, navigating officer, Mr. C. L. Cheesman, radio officer, and Mr. W. H. Mares, engineering officer. The stewards, who worked so hard for the comfort of all, were Messrs. F. C. S. Cox, D. R. Newfield, and A. F. Anderson.

